RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

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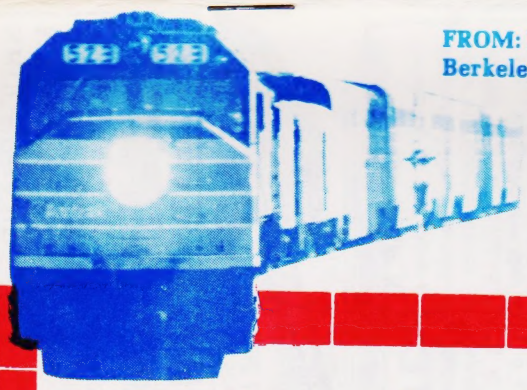
★ SUPERLINERS IN THE FEATHER RIVER CANYON



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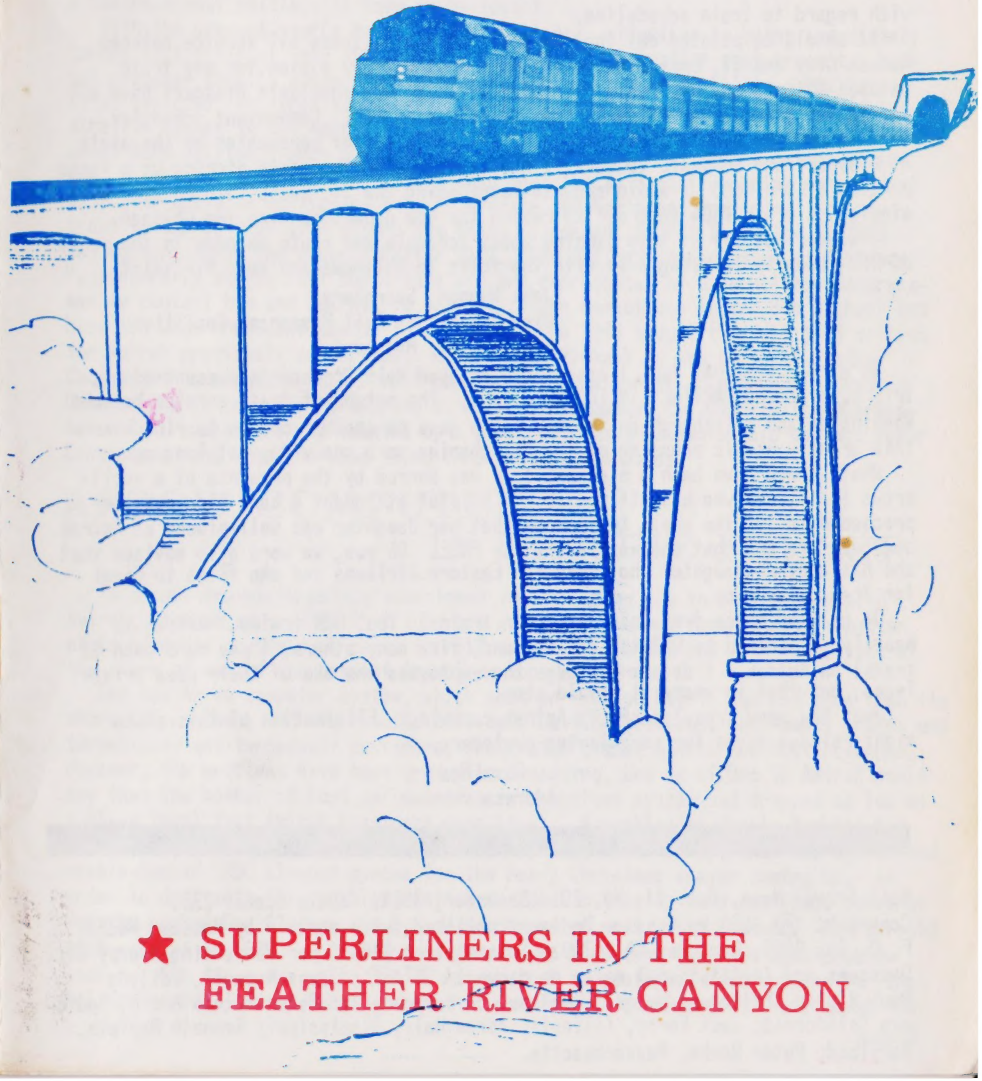

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FIRST CLASS

ON THE COVER

Artist's conception of the Amtrak COAST STARLIGHT crossing the famous North Fork Bridge across the Feather River on the Western Pacific Railroad. The STARLIGHT followed this re-routing on the WP and BN between Sacramento and Klamath Falls from Nov 19 thru 26 due to a bridge out on the regular SP line. In this issue, Peter Bretz tells of his adventures in riding on this unusual routing. Photo by RTN.

LETTERS

I would like to respond to Mr. Worms' letter (RTN 233) complaining about the supposedly favored treatment Amtrak gives the state of Missouri over Illinois, with regard to train scheduling.

It should be pointed out that Missouri partially funds all service between Kansas City and St. Louis, while Illinois does not pay a dime for any train between Chicago and St. Louis. In view of this, why shouldn't Missouri have a say in the scheduling of trains that it is paying for. Convenient schedules for Missourians didn't "just happen." It took a lot of persuasion by the state of Missouri and MOKSRAIL to make it happen even with the state picking up a large portion of the tab. I would suggest lengthening the St. Louis layover time by 35 minutes on train #304 in order to restore the 4pm departure time for Chicago.

I wonder how all of this carping about schedule and route changes in the pages of RTN recently is going down with the folks in Oklahoma and West Virginia?

John Wegner, Secretary
Missouri-Kansas Rail Passenger Coalition
Kansas City, Missouri

As a long-time B&O fan, I especially enjoyed Walt Stringer's account of his trip east on the CAPITOL LIMITED (RTN 232). The return of train service between Washington and Pittsburgh on the B&O route gave me another chance to ride over this grandly scenic crossing of the Alleghenies on a snowy day not long ago.

What should have been a pleasant trip was marred by the presence of a vociferous individual who haughtily gave the helpful attendant a hard time and then proceeded to let the whole train know that her daughter was well-placed at Amtrak headquarters and that she was riding for FREE. Oh yes, we were also advised that she has another daughter who works for Eastern Airlines and she flies to Miami for free. How nice.

Do we need these free-loaders on our trains? Yes, OUR trains. Amtrak is heavily subsidized by OUR tax dollars and, like many others, I pay hard cash to travel on Amtrak. I do not begrudge the employees the use of their pass privileges, but that is where it should stop.

Just how many free-loaders is Amtrak carrying? Elimination of this abuse might release space for cash-paying customers.

L. Cummings
Address unknown

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Published twice monthly by Message Media, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $19.00 per year; single copy 80¢. Overseas and institutional rates on request. STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Peter Putnam Bretz, Southern California; Jack Ferry, Illinois; Adron Hall, Mississippi; Kenneth Maylath, Maryland; Peter Roehm, Massachusetts.

AMTRAK GETTING FULL 1982 FUNDING

A continuing budget resolution has been passed by both houses of Congress (by voice votes on Dec 14), and President Reagan signed the bill on Dec 15. The bill establishes the federal budget thru Mar 31, 1982, and it gives Amtrak the full $735 million that Congress and Amtrak agreed upon. The bill also frees Amtrak from paying state and local taxes. Wording in the measure provides for the reinstatement of the CARDINAL. That train will be started up again by about Jan 15 on a tri-weekly basis; it is expected to depart each end point on Sundays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The train is expected to remain in operation thru the end of this fiscal year, Sep 30, 1982. In order to remain operating in fiscal 1983, however, strong ridership statistics must be shown in the first part of 1982, and a Congressional battle will have to be fought.

With the present year's budget now established, attention is being immediately turned to the fiscal year 1983 budget, for the Administration must present a budget proposal shortly after the new year begins (this year's will be a bit late--it is expected the first week in February). Initial reports say that the Administration wishes to cut Amtrak's budget 18% below the present year's figure, to about $600 million. Such a reduction might mean sharp cuts in the Amtrak route map. Last winter Amtrak's Alan Boyd said that the $613 million being proposed at that time would be sufficient only to operate the Northeast Corridor. In contrast to the $600 million figure now being discussed, $788 million for FY 1983 was authorized by the reconciliation bill. The National Association of Railroad Passengers is asking rail supporters who are represented by a Republican Congressman to contact him and ask him to talk to House Republican leader Bob Michael and have him urge President Reagan to include in the 1983 budget the full $788 million for Amtrak previously authorized. Congressman Michael is now soliciting other Congressmen's suggestions for what they want in the budget. Congressman Jones of Oklahoma is in charge of preparing an alternative budget for Democratic Congressmen. Rail supporters represented by a Democratic Congressman should contact their Congressman and urge the same thing thru Congressman Jones.

ARROW COMPUTER IN MASSIVE FOULUP

To a rail traveling public accustomed for some time now to a smooth-running Amtrak, it came as a shock that the rail corporation's new reservations computer could suddenly create such chaos in rail passenger travel, and ironically just at the start of one of the busiest travel seasons of the year.

The new Arrow computer system, which went on line on Nov 1, has had more than its share of problems, and the results have been multiple bookings, near-empty trains and turned-away and turned-off customers, frustrated ticket agents and lost revenues. However, the problems have been gradually lessening, and as of Dec 16 Amtrak could say that the number of lost calls to the reservations system had dropped as low as 4.8%--a level that Amtrak considers near-ideal. A problem of double-booking had cropped up, and Amtrak discovered, presumably in late November, that the system had double-booked 5700 sleeper spaces for the heavy Christmas season coming up. In order to deal with this problem, Amtrak decided to take no more confirmed bookings for the period Dec 11 thru Jan 5, and put names on wait lists instead. Amtrak said that most of the 5700 would-be passengers never knew that they had been double-booked. For two weeks up to Dec 10 Amtrak took no confirmed reservations for the holiday period, and by Dec 10, when that problem was considered solved, about 100

double-booked names remained to be handled. Amtrak said it would add equipment when possible to accommodate them, or offer them different, alternative first class space. Amtrak said it expected to cover these 100 without further problem. Besides the computer software, Amtrak also blamed a high level of no-showism on the part of the public. The airlines have also been plagued with this problem recently, Amtrak said.

Did the computer problems account for some loss of ridership during the Thanksgiving period? we asked Amtrak. Amtrak replied that it must admit that they did. Reports have come into RTN of trains largely empty when the computer indicated they were sold out. An example was on the L.A.-Sacramento overnight train on Nov 24, when a total of 87 rode the southbound train, altho the computer was turning them away. (On the 23rd the ridership was 159, and 207 on the 25th.) A Seattle reader tried to book space in a NIGHT OWL sleeper for a late Dec date, and the Seattle station's computer terminal indicated that there was no such train. Later, the reader called the toll-free number, and the computer indicated the NIGHT OWL was sold out, and the agent advised him to keep trying every evening.

In some other ludicrous snafus, the computer in one case quoted a fare of $135.50 for the NY-Philadelphia trip, and it sold the same sleeping room to nine different passengers on one train. Ticket clerks complain that they had inadequate training to handle the more complex computer--just a few hours' of training before the system went on-line. A Southern California agent complained a few days ago that "down" time for him is at least 60-70% of the time. An Amtrak spokesman on Dec 16 admitted that there is "still some unscheduled down time on the system", but indicated that operations were "normal" and that the lost-call volume is "down appreciably."

We asked another Amtrak spokesman why the corporation put the computer on line just before the heavy holiday season. The reply was that there was no alternative--the ARTS system was literally falling apart.

RAIL CANADA

LE P'TIT TRAIN DU NORD, the Montreal-Mont-Laurier service, was one of the trains cut out in the Nov 15 VIA Rail cutback. And protestors in Montreal picketed with placards denouncing the cut. The train has been running for decades and is well-patronized, argued supporters, so why is it being discontinued?

VIA RAIL CANADA pays out over 63% of its budget to the railways for their operating services, said Conservative MP Don Mazankowski (former Minister of Transport) upon the occasion of last month's cutbacks. This compares to only 25% for Amtrak. The difference lies in what rail supporters see as unaudited overcharges by the railways. Rail proponents are calling for an Amtrak-like arrangement for VIA in which the details of the rail system's budget are made public and accessible to legislators. Mazankowski said that the political fallout from the November debacle will be around for some time, and rail-supporting legislators will make use of it even tho they are at the present stymied from stopping the cutbacks.

THE FIRST RUN of new VIA train 9, the SKEENA (Edmonton-Prince Rupert) departed Edmonton 26mins late on Nov 15, and consisted of engine 6515, steam generator 15488, baggage-sleeper 9483, sleeper "Erinview", diner-lounge 1340, coach 5503, and coach 5440 (to Jasper).

VIA'S EMPLOYEE PUBLICATION "Vialogue" in its October issue (just received) features a lead article entitled "Bi-level trains--the 'transcon' of the future?" It notes that VIA project manager, transcontinental service Ken Mozersky is pushing for bi-level cars like Amtrak's Superliners on the transcon service. The advantages of such equipment, according to Mozersky, are higher-capacity cars and more reliable equipment. "Allowing time for design and manufacturing, new bi-level equipment could be in service within the next few years."

VIA ROUTE CUTS meant the loss of about 400 VIA jobs in November. According to VIA, 50 on-board and 17 off-train jobs would disappear in VIA Atlantic district, 45 on-board and 34 off-train jobs in VIA Quebec, 28 on-board and 5 off-train jobs in VIA Ontario and 115 on-board and 70 off-train jobs in VIA West. And about 79 nationwide on-board extra were lost, and an undetermined number of non-unionized and managerial jobs.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RECOMMENDATIONS for the transportation budget for the next three years include a reduction of $290 million. VIA Rail subsidies would be reduced, meaning likely a further big cut in the passenger rail network. East Coast ferry services would also get cuts in subsidies.

CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION has been asked by Canadian labor unions to order the discontinued trains re-started and to hold hearings on the cutbacks. The Canadian Railway Labour Association believes that the CN and CP have an obligation in the absence of VIA to provide the service that was cut. Rail supporters in Maine asked the ICC and the Maine Public Utilities Commission to try to halt the discontinuance of the ATLANTIC, which ran partly thru Maine. Both of those agencies failed to act on behalf of the train, however.

THE FIRST RUN of VIA train 1-55 on Nov 15 between Montreal and Toronto on The CN line had this consist: engines 6540, 6617, 6621, baggage 613, coaches 122, 5595, 5627, snack bar coach 3220, coaches 111, 101, dome lounge diner 512, Dyaniter 5714, sleepers "Chateau Brule", "Chateau Radisson", and dome lounge sleeper "Riding Mountain Park."

VIA RAIL PRESIDENT Frank Roberts said on Dec 1 that he will resign if there are more cuts in service like those of Nov 15. Western VP Harold Murray followed suit, saying he also would quit. The two were talking to a Parliamentary committee in Ottawa.

15% FARE INCREASE on VIA Rail is coming in 1982. A 10% increase took effect this fall, and a 5% increase on the Quebec City-Windsor route occurred on Dec 15. VIA is losing about 1.2 million riders as a result of the 20% route cutbacks of Nov 15.

CN MARINE FERRY service between Nova Scotia and Argentia, Newfoundland was cut in half at the end of November when the Ministry of Transport reduced its subsidies for the runs. The vessel "Marine Cruiser", one of two ferries operating in winter, was taken off the runs and is docked at Point Edward, Nova Scotia.

RECENT HISTORY SHOWS that Amtrak officials who took the Department of Transportation (anti-rail) viewpoint were soon forced out of their jobs. And in Canada, rail supporters are watching to see the effect on VIA Quebec VP Leo Moisan who recently stated before a VIA Quebec Consultative Committee that the Ministry of Transport had to cut trains "because the Canadian Transport Commission took only the consumer viewpoint into account, and did not consider the economic aspect."

THE WINDSOR STATION now has major renovations in place, with an expansion of the building and a platform shed being built. The station, originally a suburban stop, has never been adequate for the crowds. This of course means that there is little chance of any integration of VIA and Amtrak services in the Detroit-Windsor area, since any such combination would bypass the present Windsor station.

CANADIAN AMTRAK TELEPHONE number has consistently been out of service since September in the Waterloo, Ontario area, complains a Canadian subscriber. Frequently one number is out while the other is available; often both are out.

MILTON GO TRAIN service began Oct 26. There are three Monday-Friday trains each way, leaving Milton at 6:30am, 6:50am and 7:20am, and leaving Toronto at 4:40pm 5pm, and 5:30pm. Running time is 65mins. This is the first passenger service on this CP line since the Windsor and Owen Sound trains were discontinued in the late 1960s.

CP COMMUTER SERVICE between Montreal and the Rigaud-Vaudreuil area will be cut back Feb 1 and later eliminated, CP Rail said on Dec 1. Negotiations between the railway and the Montreal Urban Community Transit Commission have broken down, and CP is not able to run it without some public sudsidy.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT

SAN DIEGO TROLLEY AFTER FOUR MONTHS
by Walt Stringer

RTN readers may be wondering how things are going on the San Diego Trolley. The answer, as of the four-month anniversary date of Nov 26, is Great!

Ridership and revenues are higher than expected, most publicity accorded the line has been favorable, and operating statistics show a near-perfect performance each month.

During the summer the Trolley benefitted from the tourist and novelty markets, but now a growing base of regular commuters, shoppers and Tijuana visitors is taking shape. Ridership never dips below 10,000 daily (even Thanksgiving Day), seems to average 12-13,000 per weekday and 13-14,000 per weekend, and even peaks around 15-16,000 on heavy Saturdays. September and October figures show revenue covering between 85 and 90% of variable cost, with on-time performance averaging 97-98%.

Base Trolley service is five 2-car trolleys (64 seats per car), with one 3-car train on weekday mornings (7am departure from San Ysidro) and afternoons (3:30pm and 5:10pm from Santa Fe depot). On weekends a third car is used if traffic warrants, usually between 11am and 6pm, on one of the trains which connects with Amtrak arrivals or departures.

The U2 LRV has proven generally reliable, tho the ability to use the wheelchair lift has been severely restricted by breakdowns, a situation the Trolley is attempting to remedy. Another major problem is education of passengers, as they frequently hold open or block doors, preventing trains from moving. The honor system ticket structure is working well.

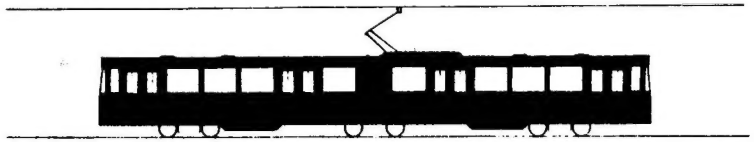
Given the lowkey success of the San Ysidro line, it is natural to wonder about expansion. Remember that the entire SDAE Railway property is owned by the San Diego MTDB; that the Trolley used no Federal funds (instead, a California fuel tax fund), and that the fuel tax authorization expires in 1982; and finally that all transit projects in the state are funded by the California Transportation Commission, which is responsible for slicing the pie each year. Competing rail system projects include Los Angeles-Long Beach, San Jose, Sacramento, SP commute line, Contra Costa County, Los Angeles, Orange County, and a host of smaller properties with their buses.

First on the list--and funded--is double tracking and LRV expansion of the San Ysidro line. While no dates are firm, the ten new U2's should arrive from Dusseldorf in summer of 1982, entering service by fall. Double tracking will commence in stages, beginning in early summer and concluding by the end of 1982. Projections are for definite train-size increase (3-4 cars) and possible headway increase (10-15mins, versus the present 20mins).

The East Line from Downtown to El Cajon (Santee) via La Mesa and Lemon Grove seems likely to happen, but it's hard to say when--at least 30 months of construction are projected once funding is lined up. Proposition C on the November ballot garnered a 65%-35% referendum in favor of the line, but at least one group of citizens based in La Mesa has expressed opposition and even has threatened lawsuits based on technical issues. The current MTDB proposal requests $89 million funding for a "no frills" system much like the present--start with single and double track supported by basic stations, then expand from there. Presumably more cars would be needed, since the SDAE line to El Cajon is slightly longer with many more curves and grades, and ridership projections are again in five figures.

Other expansions, such as Pt. Loma, Del Mar, and even a loop to Oceanside and Escondido via ATSF and I-15 freeway median, have been bandied about as long-term ideas. One short-term item being considered is a line extension of 100-200 yards on Keltner Boulevard at the Santa Fe depot.

As with many public projects, these events will unbold slowly, but hopefully surely. In the meantime, the present line makes a very nice ride.



WATCHING THE TROLLEY ON A DECEMBER DAY
by Robert J. Swan

One hundred thirty-three workers from National Steel and Shipbuilding (NASSCO) boarded their 3-car southbound Trolley within the normal 20-second stop; all the commuters are getting good at riding, just like on Southern Pacific! Moments later, 30 would board the northbound, as we did.

Wayne Diefenbach and I were observing the 3:30pm shift-change operation at Harborside Station of the San Diego Trolley on Wednesday, Dec 2. "Robert J. Swan, what are YOU doing here?!" And, shaking hands with MTDB General Manager Tom Larwin--who was accompanied by one of his bosses, Lucy Killea, the downtown councilwoman--I said his railroad "Is working very well!" What would they be discussing with NASSCO? More driver education at grade crossings such as this one? More transit commuters that would be sought following doubletrack completion, faster running times, additional equipment? Or thanking NASSCO for their cooperation in making "Ready 10" tickets available?

Grade crossing operation was the focus of our observations, here, as well as this morning at the Amtrak crossing at Lomas Santa Fe Drive north of Del Mar. Yes, that SAN DIEGAN rounding that curve, white headlight shining, was a beautiful sight at about 12:20pm. And yes, the motorists must have felt their half-minute delay was worth the display of power-in-motion as the train whistle-whooshed across and fled off as if it were the FLYING SCOTSMAN. Also impressive to us was the very deliberate care that all motorists showed to respect the double white safety lines beside the high-speed tracks. Some even looked out for the others' safety.

During the NASSCO rush hour, tho, too many motorists got careless and allowed themselves to be backed up on the tracks. So when the motorwoman, sounding her new horn, rounded the bend, as the lights were flashing, the bells tinkling, the gates lowering, one panel truck driver got caught on the tracks. That gorgeous Trolley, with its three high pantographs, stopped short--and quietly waited. The motorist--who clearly was not "with it", finally poked ahead and to his right into some space he managed to find, thus permitting the NASSCO rush hour to proceed. Then 133 patrons boarded that 3:45 southbound, having leisurely walked from the shipyard gates, then inserted their tickets or coins in the machine, and relaxed to await their transit. They would board professionally within the normal twenty seconds.

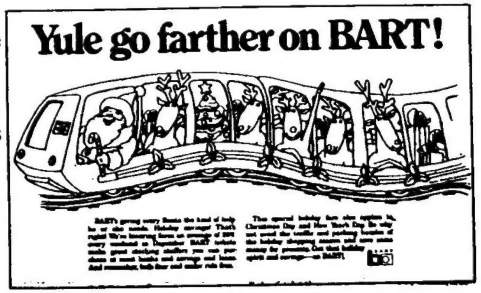
Not so the others, who almost leapfrogged over each other to cross Harbor Boulevard first, to get to their motorcycles or to their cars or to their rides first, ahead of the others and the traffic jam. Wayne Diefenbach, with me, described the 3:30 outpouring from NASSCO as a "flood of ants."

So we were observing light rail's peak challenge: the very busy grade crossing. With one approximately 30-seconds delay in a still-new-to-many situation, my description to Larwin was "right on."

Elsewhere on the line: Tinted windows are beginning to appear in the LRVs. Doubletracking is proceeding well: numerous bridges have been completed and are ready to receive ballast and track, and additional catenary poles are being put up. Thirty percent of present Trolley riders used to take their cars to work. It can be predicted that present records will fall when doubletracking is completed and additional equipment on order is placed in service. A proposed extension eastward was given a resounding vote of confidence in the November election by many once-dubious citizens; they have seen that it "is working very well!"

SAN DIEGO TROLLEY is the subject of an interesting article in the New Yorker magazine (Dec 14) by renowned New Yorker writer Calvin Trillin.

A RECENT VISITOR to the San Diego Trolley operations came away with a warning that maintenance procedures on the German-built trolleys do not seem to be up to snuff. The German engineers have left and the San Diego maintenance people do not always follow the German recommendations. Problems caused wouldn't show up for some years.



THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE from BART shown here contains a bad pun, but has good fare news for Christmas-shopper riders. BART reduced fares 25% on weekends in December and on Christmas and New Year's days.

CALTRANS/SP COMMUTE LINE out of San Francisco has shown patronage drops recently, and part of the blame goes to the S.F. Muni Railway for poor connecting bus service. Connections were cut back recently when the Muni was running short of serviceable buses. Caltrans plans to run the trains into San Francisco as far as the Ferry Building, beyond the present terminal point, have run into stiff opposition from SP. Caltrans's Fred Barton, who is trying to improve the operation, also wants push-pull equipment, and this the railroad opposes also. Caltrans wants to raise fare an average of 25%, and the S.F. PUC unanimously disapproved this on Dec 8. The final decision on the fares will come later from the state PUC.

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK had 15,000 residents riding free buses for downtown holiday shopping on Sunday, Dec 13, the largest single Sunday ridership recorded in the six years of the annual program.

NEW YORK CITY'S Westway highway project is closer to acceptance after a Dec 13 dismissal of objections brought by environmental groups. A Federal judge in New York left one issue to be settled--that of hazards to wildlife in the Hudson River, and he will make a decision on that probably in January. At that time, the environmentalists can appeal their dismissals. A 1974 suit brought by Action for Rational Transit was thrown out completely by the judge at the December hearing.

NEW YORK CITY will build a new variety of sharp wire fences around 18 MTA subway yards at a cost of $22.4 million to prevent vandalism of cars while in storage. New York's Mayor Koch announced the plan Dec 14. Funds come from the city.

THE WINSTON-SALEM NC Transit Authority won two top awards in a graphics competition for the best-designed system route map and timetable for 1981, according to Bus Ride magazine.

THE GRUMMAN CORPORATION has been given three additional months by New York's MTA to repair and return 837 Flxible buses that had developed structural cracks. The buses must be back to New York by Apr 15 in order to be acceptable.

THE LOS ANGELES to Long Beach proposed trolley was opposed by David Brodsly (author of L.A. Freeway: An Appreciative Essay) writing in the L.A. Times Nov 23. Brodsly said that light rail would do little to improve transportation in L.A. On Dec 3 the newspaper published four letters disagreeing with the author, and a letter from a woman who agreed.

CITY OF CHICO, California has had a state-funded feasibility study completed on a possible light rail line. The study results, announced Nov 20, indicate the project, using Western Pacific rails, would work. The Chico Enterprise-Record on Nov 24 editorialized strongly in favor of the line. A major stumbling block to its initiation is the attitude of the Western Pacific.

TEN BUDD SPV-2000 Rail Diesel Cars were delivered in October to the Hudson Line for use between Croton-Harmon and Poughkeepsie NY on the non-electrified section of line.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS
by Dan Pilipow

The Sunday after Thanksgiving is traditionally Amtrak's busiest day of the year, but this year--with a deepening recession and the cost of travel up--would those Limiteds be full?

I would return to Chicago Union Station the Sunday after Thanksgiving for the fourth year in a row, but since I recorded the consists and loads last year, I could make a more accurate comparison this time.

The first clue on how the holiday traffic was going came on the 10 o'clock news on Thanksgiving eve. At O'Hare, the busiest airport in the U.S., airline traffic was "down considerably." Two years ago, 160,000 passed thru O'Hare; last year there were 134,000; and this Thanksgiving eve 120,000--a drop of 10%. The story at the bus depots: business was close to last year. Reports from Amtrak said that long distance traffic was down.

Armed with these reports, I drove to Chicago a little pessimistic, with all signs pointing to a light day.

The first departure of the day, the WOLVERINE, left at 7:45 with six Amcoaches and an Amcafe car with 450 on board; 100 more passengers than last year. The STATE HOUSE then departed with only 100 passengers, down by 300. One surprise was that the SHAWNEE to Carbondale consisted of seven Regional Transportation Authority bilevel coaches. No. 391 left Chicago right on time with 565 passengers on board. Amtrak leased several RTA coaches for short haul routes to relieve overcrowding.

The first arrival of the day was a 14-car CITY OF NEW ORLEANS with only 240 aboard, down by almost 200 from last year. Trains to and from Milwaukee consisted of four or five RTA bilevels, with loads up slightly. Train 300 from St. Louis pulled in with 220, twice the load of last year. As time wore on, a few more short haul trains rolled in with marginal loads.

The first bright spot was the Amfleeted ANN RUTLEDGE which departed with 600 passengers, surpassing last year's train by 150! The usually reliable BROADWAY LIMITED pulled in two hours late and delivered 275 passengers, down by 70. The BLUE WATER, ILLINI and ILLINOIS ZEPHYR arrived and unloaded 520 into the station.

Another bright spot was the LAKE CITIES which sported seven Amcoaches and an Amcafe which left Chicago with 735 on board. Some standees were also left behind. Two years ago Amtrak ran a second section as far as Jackson MI, and last year ran a 340-seat Turbo for 600 people and left 260 behind! Amtrak should look into running an Extra 352 next year. The SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR unloaded 220, and even with the thru cars from trains 26 and 36, ridership was down. The inbound LAKE SHORE LIMITED arrived with 320, also down.

Over on the north end of the station, the Seattle-bound EMPIRE BUILDER departed with 320 aboard, with a rather small consist of three Superliner coaches, diner, lounge, and two Superliner sleepers. Before boarding, the crowd was grouped by destinations, and only about 50 were going west of Minneapolis. Minutes later, the SOUTHWEST LIMITED rolled in with 310 passengers--the first long distance train to haul in more passengers this year than last year, by some 30 people.

It was 4:00pm and I had to look at my calendar to see if it was 1981 or 1944! The station was filled with people wall to wall. In the next hour and a half, 3000 people would board trains, and another 500 would arrive in the station during the frenzy.

The BLUE WATER started the ball rolling by loading 485 passengers on the Port Huron-bound train. The SOUTHWEST LIMITED left with 340. The ILLINI, with six or seven bilevels, pulled out of the station 20mins late with 355 patrons. All three trains had improved loads over last year.

Meanwhile, 400 passengers swarmed the LAKE SHORE. A 14-car TWILIGHT LIMITED took on 600 passengers and left right on time at 5:15! Train 21, the all-Superliner EAGLE, with three sleepers, dining and lounge cars plus six coaches, loaded 500 passengers, and an Extra 21, made up of four RTA bilevels, loaded 200 students for Bloomington IL, and they left at 5:20 and 5:30 respectively. Meanwhile, train 353, the LAKE CITIES, had just arrived from Toledo, dumping 500 passengers into the maze of people. The HOOSIER STATE prepared to leave with 370 on board, scheduled to depart also at 5:20.

The 5:30 departure to Milwaukee seemed lonely in the north end of the station. As it loaded quietly, the south end was deluged with people! Amtrak later took advantage of the north end by loading train 347, the ILLINOIS ZEPHYR, on track 19 (the only track that runs thru the station). A long consist of 15 cars--Amcafe, Amclub, conventional lounge and 12 Amcoaches-- was moved into the station, and 600 riders quickly greeted the train.

The CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, with a long consist of Amfleet and Heritage Fleet cars, loaded 600 passengers, most of them students to Carbondale. Some cars would be cut off at Carbondale.

Now the crowds thinned out, and train 5, the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, and train 40, the BROADWAY LIMITED, prepared to depart with 280 and 300 aboard from the now-peaceful station. With only four arrivals two hours away, I also chose to depart. Another holiday rush came to an end at Chicago Union Station.

* * *

A look at the score card: This year Amtrak moved 11,995 passengers in Chicago, while last year Amtrak moved 12,215 passengers, a difference of 220, or a small decrease of 1.8% (the figures were hand-counted, with the exception of 3 trains, where a good estimate was made, but as I am only human, there is a margin of error of 3%). But taking into account that Amtrak discontinued five roundtrips this year, there was an increase of 9% (passengers riding the five roundtrips discontinued Oct 1, 1981 totalled 1395).

Overall, the day was very good. Amtrak staff handled the crowds very well. Only three trains ran late, and only the BROADWAY was tardy by more than 30mins. Most trains had enough equipment, except for train 352. One thing seemed evident: people were not traveling as far this year. Only three long distance trains had improved loads over last year. The short-haul trains made the difference. (Chicago has many on-line college towns which students must travel to and from during the holidays, recession or not.)

(This survey counted all trains between 7:30am and 7:30pm. Not counted were four night arrivals from St. Louis, Carbondale, Detroit and Milwaukee, projected to bring in 1600 passengers.)

AMTRAK'S BASE AND INCREMENTAL ROUTES

Regular RTN readers are aware of the fact that, beginning with monthly data of May 1981, Amtrak switched to a different accounting system to separate out short distance and long distance trains.

Below are excerpts from an Amtrak internal memo dated Jun 4, 1981, that explained this system. This memo was recently obtained by rail supporters under the Freedom of Information Act. Amtrak's definitions of "base" and "incremental" portions of a route can apparently be restated as base and EXPENDABLE elements. The new accounting method effectively shows how many of the present passengers could continue to be served should further long-distance retrenchment become a reality.

Some of the routes mentioned have been discontinued since the memo's date.

Starting with May, 1981 reports, the Train Earnings System (TES) and Route Profitability System (RPS) will report revenues and allocated costs for selected trains differently than in the past. Fifteen trains on 19 routes will be affected; many of which will be shown as having base and incremental elements. A train with base and incremental elements can be defined as a train which, if terminated, would be replaced by a smaller and/or shorter distance train. The smaller, shorter distance train is its base element and its added operation is its incremental element.

A comparison of the present and new reporting methods are summarized below.

Route	Present Method	New Method
Boston-Newport News New York-New Orleans New York-Savannah Washington-Montreal	Each route traverses the NEC and is reported as a separate route. Corridor and long distance revenues and costs are shown as route revenues and costs.	Each route will be reported on two separate routes. Corridor local passengers and corridor local train costs will be reported as NEC conventional routes. Only revenues and costs generated by the incremental long distance operation beyond the corridor will be reported in the Boston-Newport News, New York-New Orleans, New York-Savannah, and Washington-Montreal routes.

Route	Present Method	New Method
		The Zephyr will carry cars which will connect with and be carried by the Desert Wind and Pioneer.
Chicago-Oakland	These are part of Chicago-Oakland-Los Angeles route. Revenues and costs between Chicago and Ogden are identified to Zephyr's and Desert Wind's operations.	Chicago-Oakland local revenues and costs will be reported.
Los Angeles-Ogden		Los Angeles-Ogden local operation plus incremental revenues and costs generated by thru car operation, Los Angeles-Chicago will be reported.
Seattle-Salt Lake City	Operations are limited to Seattle-Salt Lake City	Seattle-Salt Lake City local operation plus incremental revenues and costs generated by thru car operation, Seattle-Chicago will be reported.
Chicago-St. Louis	Each is shown on a separate route. Revenues and costs are identified to the separate routes.	Local Chicago-St. Louis revenues and cost of the State House, Chicago-Kansas City and Chicago-Texas trains will be reported
Chicago-Kansas City		St. Louis-Kansas City local operation plus incremental revenues and costs of passengers traveling beyond St. Louis wil be reported.
Chicago-Texas		St. Louis-Texas local operation plus incremental revenues and costs generated by thru service operation, Chicago-Texas will be reported.
Chicago-Duluth	Chicago-Minneapolis and Minneapolis-Duluth revenues and costs are shown separately, but are on the same route.	Chicago-Minneapolis local revenues and costs will be reported in the Chicago-Minneapolis route. Minneapolis-Duluth local operation plus incremental revenues and costs of passengers traveling beyond Minneapolis will be reported in th Minneapolis-Duluth route.
New York-Montreal	Revenues and costs are reported on one separate route.	New York-Albany locals will be reported in Empire Service. Albany-Montreal local operation plus incremental revenues and costs of passengers traveling beyond Albany will be reported in New York-Montreal route.
Portland-Vancouver	The Portland-Seattle and Seattle-Vancouver trains are reported in the same route.	Portland-Seattle and Seattle-Vancouver will be reported on two separate routes.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS:

In the article on the inaugural run of the Portland section of the EMPIRE BUILDER, by Rocky Shay, in RTN #233, there was a major mixup of paragraphs in the process of arranging typeset copy. In order to follow the story properly, it is necessary to read it as follows:

On page 7, before starting the last paragraph (that begins "(By the way..."), go on to page 8 and begin reading at line 17 in the second column ("Time to leave, ...") and read on thru the paragraph that begins under the photo ("I sense that...") and then go back and read the unread section starting with the last paragraph on page 7 before returning to the ending section of the story on page 9 (starting with "Lounge 33009..."). RTN regrets the error.

LAST TRAIN TO KEDDIE by Peter Bretz

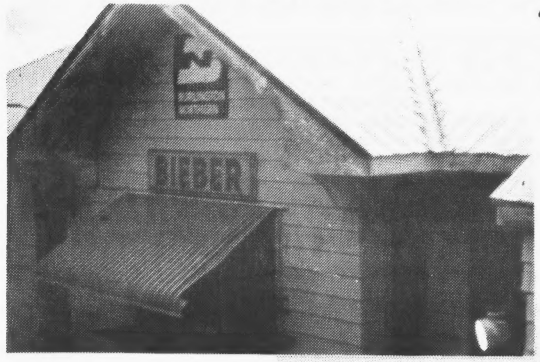
Superliners in the Feather River Canyon

(From Nov 19 thru Nov 26--Thanksgiving Day--Amtrak's COAST STARLIGHT detoured between Sacramento CA and Klamath Falls OR on the Western Pacific and Burlington Northern. The cause was a bridge out on the SP at milepost 304, 15 miles south of Dunsmuir. Here Pete Bretz tells of riding the last--northbound--train that made the detour.)

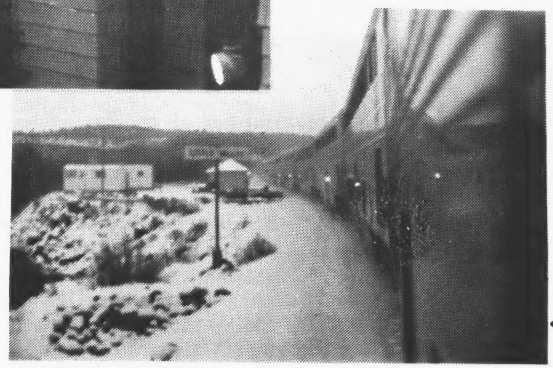
★ ★ ★

It wasn't until Nov 25 that I learned that trains 11 and 14 were being detoured via the Western Pacific up Feather River Canyon and onto the Inland Gateway. Soon I was on the line to Amtrak: "Hello, Amtrak? Suppose I wanted to go to Dunsmuir; I understand I'd have to take a bus. Do I still have to do that?" The agent said no, the train will go its regular route tonight, but he'd check. I waited anxiously. "Oh, I'm sorry," said Mr. Amtrak, "I'm afraid you'll have to be bused from Davis after all. The bridge isn't repaired yet." (Oh, joy!) But no, no space is available tonight, but economy roomette #3 could be booked tomorrow. Thus I left on Thanksgiving Day from Los Angeles.

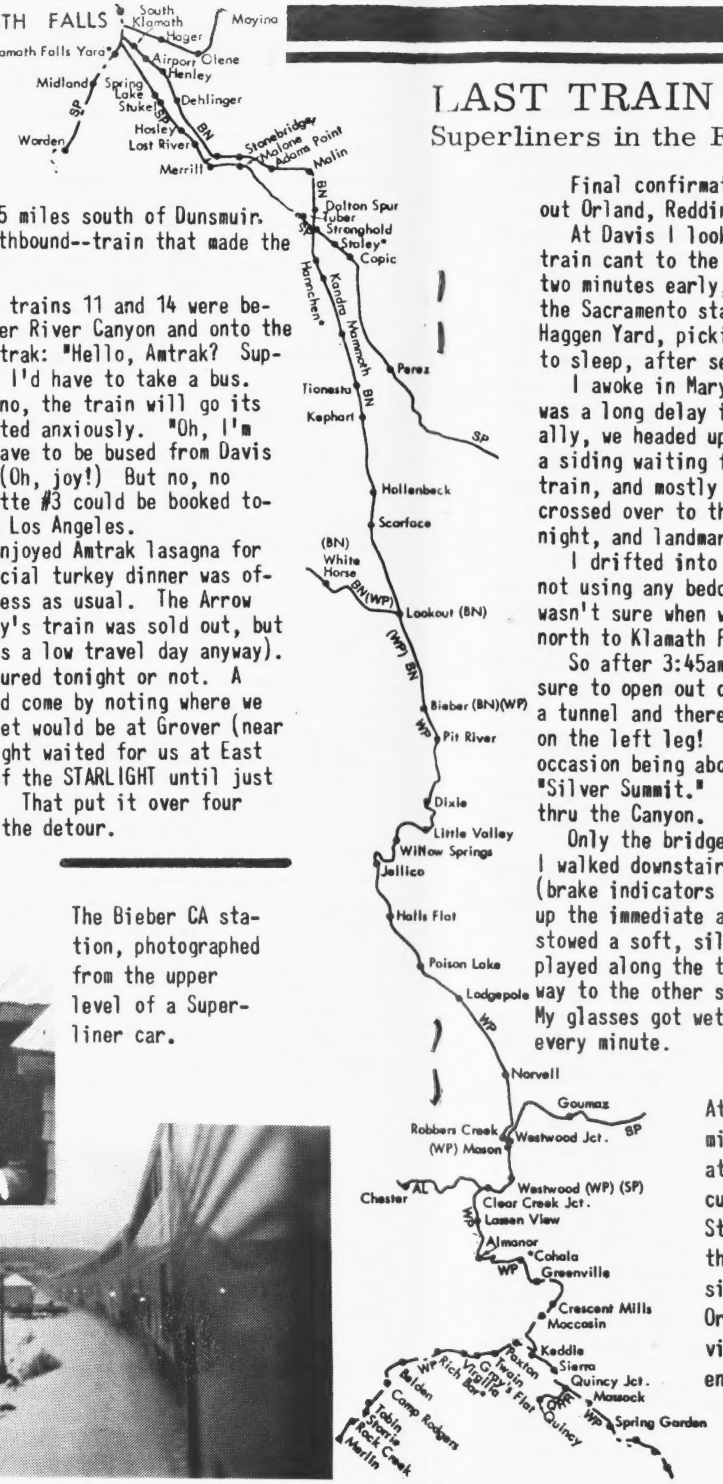
The ride up the Coast was typical, and I enjoyed Amtrak lasagna for my noon meal that Nov 26. No traditional special turkey dinner was offered, no decorations in the cars--just business as usual. The Arrow reservations computer had indicated that today's train was sold out, but there was plenty of space (Thanksgiving Day is a low travel day anyway). No one on board knew whether we would be detoured tonight or not. A good estimate of the chance for a detour would come by noting where we passed southbound train 11. Normally, the meet would be at Grover (near Pismo Beach), but no train was there. A freight waited for us at East San Luis Obispo, but that was all. No sign of the STARLIGHT until just below King City. We flashed by it at 5:25pm. That put it over four hours late--a sure bet that it had come over the detour.



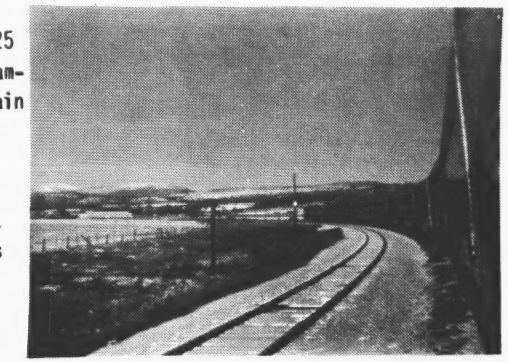
The Bieber CA station, photographed from the upper level of a Superliner car.



(Right:) The COAST STARLIGHT breezes thru Little Valley CA on the Western Pacific. Photos by the author.



At Malin OR, 25 miles from Klamath Falls, train curves west. Station is on the opposite side of train. Order board is visible near engines.



Final confirmation came at Oakland, as the train announcer did not call out Orland, Redding or Dunsmuir as station stops.

At Davis I looked out the window of my darkened roomette and saw the train cant to the right, heading towards the east. We left Davis at 10:53pm, two minutes early, then stopped in Sacramento to change crews. One mile past the Sacramento station, we turned off the SP and onto the Western Pacific at Haggen Yard, picking up a WP pilot. My eyes began to get heavy, and I went to sleep, after setting my watch alarm for 3:05am.

I awoke in Marysville, as we passed the station at 1:19am. Then there was a long delay in the yards. At Oroville the same thing happened. Finally, we headed up into the Feather River Canyon. We rotted 30 minutes on a siding waiting for a freight. My room was on the right side of the train, and mostly I could see only mountainside. Occasionally the train crossed over to the left side of the river, but it was a pitch black, rainy night, and landmarks were not discernible.

I drifted into and out of sleep, stretched out on the folded-down seats, not using any bedding. I had neglected to bring timetables or maps, so I wasn't sure when we would be nearing the Keddie Wye, where we would turn north to Klamath Falls. I didn't want to miss that!

So after 3:45am I kept alert while we passed thru tunnels, as one was sure to open out on the Keddie bridge. At long last, at 4:28 we came out of a tunnel and there it was: that famous wye bridge, and we were heading out on the left leg! This was only my second time over this route, the other occasion being aboard the CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR on Sep 17, 1968 in D&RGW sleeper "Silver Summit." At that time, we rolled over the right leg to continue on thru the Canyon.

Only the bridge itself was visible, the dark night cloaking other scenery. I walked downstairs and opened a vestibule window. A parade of green lights (brake indicators showing released brakes) along our Superliner train lighted up the immediate area. I could see snow falling. The marvelous flakes bestowed a soft, silent closeness to the scene. The locomotive headlight played along the tracks and lit up the mountainside as we slowly wound our way to the other side of the valley. The train ducked in and out of tunnels. My glasses got wet with snow and I nearly froze to death, but it was worth every minute.

I kept looking out, seeing occasional lights from highway 89 far below, until I was numb from the cold. Then I hopped back upstairs to my warm and darkened roomette. A few minutes later, on a siding is a hi-rail car, followed by Amtrak's southbound COAST STARLIGHT (this was a violation of WP rule T-72 which states that westbound trains are superior). The meet of the two STARLIGHTS was at Greenville at 4:45am. I then set the alarm for 6:45am and fell asleep.

I didn't hear my watch go off, but I awoke at 7:05am to a winter wonderland of whiteness. It was the proverbial fairyland of snow, covering the trees, still coming down, and so clean! Up and at 'em again!

I brought my camera along, and opened the vestibule window once more. I could see for miles as the train headed down a grade amid swirls of whiteness. Mount Lassen hovered to our immediate south. And was that Mount Shasta away up there to the northwest, or just a cloud formation?

We passed Little Valley about 7:15am. At this point, Susann Hanson, sleeping car attendant, came by with some wakeup coffee, which was much appreciated. I continued looking out and taking photos, pushing the color film to 400asa, until we approached Bieber. It was here that the WP pilot detrained and a BN man got on, plus a trainmaster or two, and more officials--a packed cab.

We were ready to leave at 8:11am, but had to "wait for time" until 8:20am. Reason? The train arrived in Bieber much earlier than expected, and the orders weren't ready yet. Finally, we were off, and we passed the Bieber station on ex-Great Northern track. We are still on rails I had never yet traveled, and have been since Keddie Wye.

It was now time to go into the diner for some Am-microwave breakfast. It was a pretty nauseating concoction of scrambled eggs and cheese croquettes. Generally I am not too critical of Amtrak's microwave food service, tho, having enjoyed such past delights as the short ribs and the lasagna. And later on today I would have the "new try" steak (not TOO bad, tho a little dry--but the price was right at $4.95).

The top speed on the BN's part of this railway seems to be 50mph. While nibbling that so-called breakfast, I recalled that back in the 1930's E. M. Frimbo was a dining car steward on this line during the summer. The food back then would have been... well, a far cry from this present inadequacy. The coffee tastes good, tho.

At Kandra we can see the Indian Petroglyphs formation, clear skies and plenty of snow. Five miles farther along, at Stronghold, we cross over the SP's Modoc subdivision, at 9:35am. Our line sports semaphore signals at this point, and I manage to photograph a few of them.

The conductor announces that Klamath Falls is coming up in a couple of minutes, but we are still about 25 miles out. The day is crisp and clear. We pass the airport, then stop at the BN yards to let off the pilot. At Bieber Line Junction we join the SP main and go another mile into Klamath Falls station, arriving at 10:30am. The cars are watered, yet we pull out after only 12mins, at 10:42am, 4hrs, 32mins late.

I returned to my roomette, got down the bedding, and wafted off to sleep. Nevertheless, I was awake by Chemult, in order to vestibule and photograph more "winter wonderland" we would encounter at Cascade Summit.

My ticket read Portland, and we arrived there at 5:35pm, late by 3hrs, 45mins. All in all, it was well sorth the expense ($149.50 one-way L.A.-Portland plus $95 Republic Air return) for the mileage and the experience. I logged 202 previously untraveled rail miles this trip. Incidentally, the mileage from Davis to Klamath Falls is 353.9 via the SP's regular route thru Dunsmuir, and 354.7 via Sacramento, WP-BN via Keddie and the Inland Gateway, a mere 0.8 of a mile difference. Still we took about four hours longer on the detour, mostly because of slower speed limits.

The STARLIGHT had gone this way before--about once every three years or so--but never for more than one or two days at a time. And it turned out that our train was the last one to take the Inland Gateway.

ON THE LEHIGH TO THE SUSQUEHANNA

by Pete Roehm & Jimmy Nickerson

Columbus Day weekend, 1981, and an assortment of training pleasures awaits us. Awaiting our departure at Boston's South Station was ex-Lehigh Valley 353, the oldest (1916) active private rail car in U.S. and Canadian mainline service. Dave Ross and Dick Horstmann of 353's management team--Lehigh Black Diamond Limited--were on hand along with ten passengers and a crew of five, including 14-year-old-looking-19 Steve Rathke of Toledo, a steward apprentice.

Amtrak train 169, the PATRIOT, left on time with the 353 on the rear, and was often into stations ahead of schedule as it sped down the old New Haven Shoreline on a crisp and colorful autumn morning while the 353's guests partook of "morning restoratives" followed by a champagne brunch of pastries, sausage, French toast, muffins and pure New York State maple syrup.

The 353 had been the official car of the once-proud Lehigh Valley and was kept in its Sayre PA shops when not on line. This Pullman creation of another era was retired upon Conrail's assumption of the LV operation in 1976 and obtained in 1977 by the 14 gentlemen who comprise Lehigh Black Diamond Limited of Syracuse NY.

Our plans called for us to leave the 353 at New York and not return that evening to Boston when it trailed train 176, the MERCHANTS LIMITED, upon which the guests would enjoy cocktails, shrimp and Black Diamond cheese before dining amidst the proper surroundings on Delmonico peppercorn steak, Idaho potatoes, salad, cheese, apple pie, all enhanced by Cabernet Sauvignon and postscripted with sufficient cordials of choice. LV 353's next journey would be via the old Pennsylvania mainline to Pittsburgh, returning on the B&O.

Upon arriving in Gotham we checked into our room at the Parker Meridien, Air France's new hotel in Manhattan, and dined later that evening at its highly acclaimed and most elegant dining room, Maurice, before seeing a production of "Best Little Whorehouse in Texas" on Broadway. Sunday morning would be a date with Suzie-Q in New Jersey.

Sunday, the eleventh. The first passenger train in some 15 years awaits it passengers at Passaic Junction in Saddlr River NJ, on the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway, a line that just last year had been all but given permission to abandon its operation completely. It was rescued by the Delaware Otsego Corporation (DOS), a shortline operator from Cooperstown WV that also operates the CACV, CNYK, FJG, and LASB. The sponsor of this unusual trip was the very active Jersey Central Chapter of the NRHS along with assistance from NJ Transit. GP-18's 1802 and 1804 powered this special of ex-Lackawanna MU cars with open windows still used daily by NJ Transit over ex-DL&W/EL electric commuter lines. Originally built as locomotive hauled coaches, these units were converted to electric operation between 1929 and 1931 and have been on trains exclusive of locomotives for over 50 years. Those used on this trip were numbers 3222, 4324, 4366, 4306, 3207, 4348, and 4352. Spliced in the middle was diner CACV 13, ex-Amtrak 8032, with DOS' red as the window band and the letterboard painted the previous night for "Susquehanna" by the Jersey Central Chapter's "instant paint-a-train" crew.

Departure was at 8:30am as train 819 to Little Ferry for an hour layover at the shops to photograph various NYS&W freight equipment as well as a variety of passenger equipment of the parent corporation, including an ex-PRR heavyweight open-end observation/sleeper and a more recent round end dome observation from the CB&Q. There were also active and inactive Alco locomotives with RS-1 232 active in Bicentennial colors and 240 in the dark olive black and yellow; a dead line of RS-1 and S-2 power sat outside the house and included derelict 202, 230, 231, 234, 236, and 256 in various stages of cannibalization. Then, as train 915, we departed for Butler and intermediate points. The surroundings were mostly industrial, then became suburban residential, with some woodlands in their autumn costumes.

At Oakland, some 14.5 miles from our point of origin, we ran aground. Lackawanna MU car 4323, second from the front, sent its forward truck on the ground due to a low-hanging cowcatcher that lodged in a switch, tore off, and caused the wheels to ride up over it and then onto the ground. The rails, however, held firm and did not spread. The derailment was not unexpected by anyone including the crew. Due to the manner in which the wheels rested, the Geeps could not be successfully used to rerail the car. So the 1800's were uncoupled and taken across traffic-packed U.S. 202 and the crew whisked back to Little Ferry in a squad car to pick up RS-1's 232 and 240. In the meantime, DOS maintenance men shoved wood blocks and a rerailer under the MU car to prepare for the Alco's arrival. Nearby was a small shopping mall

that had a few shops open with snack foods, and these could then be taken to an adjacent small park and enjoyed for the 2 1/2 hours that it would take to get the railroad running again.

Alcos 232 and 240, the latter sporting a smoking journal box, showed up and eventually pulled the train back on track. There had been some discussion of whether to continue to end of line or return, and the sponsors were definitely not for returning, and thus the train would go on to Butler. There had been padding built into the schedule with the cancellation of the run on the Edgewater branch due to construction, so that the disruption in Oakland would have minimal bearing on proper schedule-keeping.

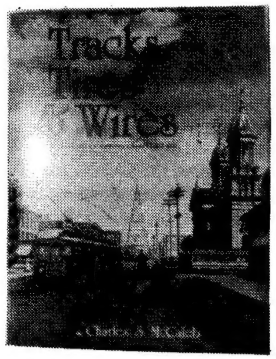
Thus, on to Butler, presently the end of operations, altho the track remains in place all the way west to Sparta Junction, once a connection with the Lehigh & Hudson River (now part of Conrail) and 25 miles farther to the west (45.7 miles from Passaic Junction). Before the termination of service here, the NYS&W had run on to the Delaware River and then as a subsidiary, Wilkes-Barre & Eastern, over the Pocono mountains to the Lackawanna Valley coal fields around Wilkes-Barre. The WB&E was cut back to Stroudsburg in 1939 and the NYS&W was out of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by 1940, when it was pulled back to Hainesburg Junction and a connection with the Lehigh & New England (abandoned in 1961). Both the WB&E and the NYS&W were active entities of the Erie between 1898 and 1937, when the Susquehanna entered bankruptcy. The line was the first of the Class One carriers to go diesel, and once operated RDC cars which later were sold to the Jersey Central during some very hard times. Passenger service was discontinued altogether on Jun 30, 1966 with practically no warning to half of the commuters, as those who would ride home the evening of the thirtieth were told there would be no trains on the first, but those who did not use the trains at night--about half--ended up waiting for the train that would never come the following morning, and the comic moniker of Now You Sit & Wait became the grim reality. Penn Central offered to buy the line in 1968, but the asking price was above PC's means, and it again narrowly missed going into Conrail eight years later. Now that Delaware Otsego has it, it is probably better off than it has ever been, as its history is anything but one of the better railroad stories.

Arriving in Butler, we reversed direction and ran back to Passaic Junction without further incident, reaching there at 6:15pm, only 15mins late. The DOS was pleased, and there most likely will be repeat performances that will, in time, include the Edgewater branch and the to-be-rebuilt trackage to Sparta Junction.

Columbus Day itself was relaxed, but touched with a final pleasantry to a very pleasant and varied weekend. With friends we dined in Bloomingdale's exquisite Le Train Bleu, a recreation of the interior of a luxury French Railways dining car. The appetizers, entrees, desserts and beverages were prepared and presented in style befitting Bloomies and it clientele, and tasted likewise. The service and attention to detail were impeccable, and we, of course, accented our repast with some of the finest of French bubbly.

Return to Boston was via Conrail local to Newark and the Norfolk & Western Airline (i.e., Piedmont) 737 to Boston (if one must fly, then naturally one must use a railroad-affiliated airline--right?). Truly a great weekend.

BOOKS



Dec 5 was the publication date of Charles S. McCaleb's book "Tracks, Tires & Wires"--Public Transportation in California's Santa Clara Valley. With San Jose planning a new light rail system, this book is especially timely, allowing us to tie in the interesting past of the area to the present and future. This book is the complete history of public transit in San Jose, Palo Alto and the entire Santa Clara Valley, including horsecars, electric interurbans, San Jose streetcars, and the SP commute trains. The 192-page 8½x11 hardbound volume is nicely illustrated with large clear historic photos, and includes maps and equipment rosters. The book also sports a full-color dust-jacket and frontispiece painting by Mike Kotowski. No transportation library is complete without this high-quality volume. The publisher is Interurban Press, Box 6444, Glendale CA 91205, and the price is $27.95 (plus $1.25 for mail orders).

Mixed Train of Thoughts

AMTRAK BOARD MEETING was not held in late November, but was held instead on Dec 9 in Washington. Marketing VP William Norman was promoted to Group VP of Marketing, Sales and Planning. James H. English, former Staff Director of the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, was named VP - Government Affairs. He was also formerly Staff Director of the Transportation Appropriations Subcommittee, and should bring with him much expertise and many connections in the areas of appropriations and transportation. The Board passed a resolution authorizing up to $750,000 to be spent from non-appropriated capital (i.e., money from revenues, not from federal appropriations) for initial working capital for feasibility marketing studies of high-speed trains. Amtrak said that such studies would begin once the Japanese engineering studies now underway began to show whether high-speed lines would be technically feasible in the U.S. on the four selected routes. A resolution was also passed which simplifies the red tape encountered by Amtrak in selling off old equipment and makes it easier for the rail corporation to dispose of cars it no longer wants. The Board okayed the retirement and sale of the former ARTS reservations computer equipment, and Amtrak expects that it will get over $3 million for it once a buyer is found. A Commitment Approval Request was okayed by the Board for track upgrading, phase 4, in the Kalamazoo MI-Michigan City IN corridor in the amount of $3,194,000. One Commitment Approval Request on the Board's agenda was for the retirement and sale of dome car 9363, ex-Great Northern lounge car "Lake View". RTN was unable to determine why the sale of one specific car was placed before the Board of Directors, an unusual procedure. Another interesting CAR before the Board was for the conversion of four baggage-dorm cars to wheel transport cars. Presumably this was approved.....

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THE COAST STARLIGHT will be re-routed thru Sacramento and Chico beginning no later than April 25, Amtrak said. Approval for the re-routing came Dec 14 from the National Arbitration Panel, who decided in Amtrak's favor in the dispute with SP. The panel decided that Amtrak need not pay for any track upgrading in order to effect the re-routing. The payment issue was SP's main bone of contention. SP said that it would not appeal the decision. Re-routing will add up to an hour to the train's running time, but will open up the large populated area around Sacramento to convenient use of the train. Schedule lengthening will probably take place on the northerly portion of the route.....

★ ★ ★

"SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA" is the name chosen for the new Los Angeles-Sacramento overnight train. The announcement of the selection came on Dec 14. Caltrans had run a contest in which the public could submit train names, and one would be chosen. The winning name was submitted by 65 individuals. There was a total of about 59,000 entries in the contest. A lottery was to be held a few days after the announcement to determine which of the 65 entrants would win the first prize. There was a good deal of disagreement over the name selection. The selection committee was composed of Caltrans Director Adriana Gianturco, Amtrak VP Clark Tyler, and former Oakland Raiders football team coach John Madden, a well-known rail enthusiast. Tyler and Madden both wished to select the SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA name, while Gianturco wanted the name NIGHTINGALE. Since agreement was impossible, Amtrak's advertising agency, Needham, Harper & Steers, was given the task of selection. The agency chose the SPIRIT name. The contest was the brainchild of Gene Berthelsen of Caltrans's marketing department. About $250,000 was spent on the contest.

and some rail supporters are complaining bitterly that the train's advertising budget has thus been nearly depleted without much real advertising that would help the train's ridership. Patronage has been off to a slow start, averaging about 100 per train during November (altho the Thanksgiving holiday saw some heavy days). One problem noted is that there has been no advertising of the train in the San Francisco Bay Area beyond the initial announcement of its startup, with the result that only 11% of the train's riders northbound have Oakland as their destination (according to conductor counts) while 41.5% are destined for Sacramento. Riders seem unaware that the train travels thru Oakland, thinking that it runs thru the San Joaquin Valley. No ads have appeared in such locations as Richmond, San Jose or Santa Barbara. No more ads will appear until late spring, following a survey of non-users of the train that Caltrans's marketing department is taking.....

AMTRAK RELEASED THESE publicity photos of its new Amfleet II cars, which will be used first on the SILVER STAR. Note that the windows are larger than on the original Amfleet cars. The interior shot shows the new seats, the old conventional kind without the wings that many people found obstructed forward vision and gave a claustrophobic feeling. Note in the photo that the passengers can see over the top of the seat ahead while they are seated. Amtrak said that five coaches have been delivered, but the cars could not yet be committed to a SILVER STAR consist because no cafeteria-lounge cars had been formally accepted yet, altho one has been completed. The cars have run on mechanical familiarization runs in the NE Corridor and to Florida, but most likely not in revenue service yet. The car in the photos is coach #25001.....

DETOURING A TRAIN can be expensive for Amtrak, as suggested by the log of another correspondent who rode the northbound COAST STARLIGHT over the WP/BN detour, this one the train of Nov 20. The train was already 1½ hours late leaving Oakland went past the Sacramento Amtrak station without stopping, and picked up a WP pilot crew at Haggin yard at 1:13am on the 21st. Shortly after leaving Oroville, the train made an emergency stop (about 3am), and had hit a 4-wheel drive vehicle with two occupants described as totally drunk. This was at milepost 211.08, in a deep

and narrow cut. The two occupants, not seriously injured, were put aboard the train and it backed up to Oroville to meet ambulances. It left Oroville again at 4:15am, but was held up a full hour while WP officials inspected the track. At 6am it crossed the North Fork Bridge (see our cover drawing) and entered the Feather River Canyon. Rain was falling heavily. At 8:05 the train reached Keddie. The train crew was scheduled to die (go off duty) at 8:20, so the train awaited replacement crews. An engine crew, taxied in from Dunsmuir, arrived shortly thereafter, but the train crew did not arrive until about 9:10am, on a WP hi-rail, and the train departed at 9:20. The lateness permitted passengers to view the Keddie Wye bridge in daylight. At this point SP officials aboard the train were described as becoming increasingly frustrated by the gross confusion and were prepared to operate the train themselves. The STARLIGHT reached Little Valley at 12:24pm. The scenery between Keddie and Crescent Mills is described as magnificent, with the train running along a cliffside. It becomes less interesting north of Greenville and Westwood, but becomes very interesting again between Little Valley and Bieber, along the Pitt River Canyon. At 1pm at Bieber, the WP pilot crew was changed for a BN pilot crew. The new SP crew was scheduled to die at 3pm, and it was a race to get to Klamath Falls before then. However, the train didn't, and coming into the BN yard at Klamath Falls, about 2 miles south of the Amtrak depot, the crew goes off duty, and a third crew is picked up, and the train finally reaches Klamath Falls at 3:30pm. This last crew, that worked no more than an hour, and traveled 2 or 3 miles, gets paid for a full passenger day plus for the freight job they would have worked! Besides this need for so many crews, the correspondent also decried the almost total lack of P.A. announcements of what was happening.....

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SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR riders and other fanciers of the Donner Pass route will find an excellent photographic essay, "The hill" by Richard Steinheimer in the Dec issue of Trains magazine.....

THANKSGIVING WEEKEND PATRONAGE on Amtrak may or may not have been heavier than last year--Amtrak's official counts aren't in yet (incidentally, no ridership figures have come out of the corporation recently, especially since the new computer went in, but we'll bring them to you just as soon as they are released), but the corporation was prepared for heavy traffic. One of the more unusual steps taken in preparation was the leasing of Budd bi-level equipment from Chicago's RTA for short distance runs out of Chicago, as noted in Dan Pilipow's article on p.9. An Amtrak spokesman in Washington said that NE Corridor ridership was "extremely heavy." Saturday of the weekend, not usually a peak day, was "very crowded" there also. Trains 19 and 20, the CRESCENT, were completely sold out on Wednesday and Sunday of the holiday.....

THE COAST STARLIGHT was blocked both directions on Dec 12 by a large derailment of an SP freight carrying trailer trucks on the hill just north of San Luis Obispo. Passengers were bused between the two equipment sets on that date.....

PORTLAND-SEATTLE LINE was severed when 280 feet of BN right of way sank about three feet the morning of Dec 12. The damaged area was along Puget Sound about 12 miles south of Tacoma. Buses were substituted for all trains on the line--the Seattle-Portland trains, the PIONEER, and the COAST STARLIGHT. The STARLIGHT terminated at Portland. Operations were back to normal on Dec 15 with the opening of one track; first train thru was the southbound PIONEER. The other track was expected to open in 3 or 4 more days.....

THE EMPIRE BUILDER will be running daily permanently--no more tri-weekly operation. That news came from Amtrak on Dec 15.....

THE MOUNT RAINIER, train 797, ran 18 Superliner and Hi-level cars and 3 engines on Nov 29 handling Seattle Seahawk football fans from the Portland area plus Thanksgiving holiday business. The Seahawk crowd was lighter than usual, around 850. Four of the 18 cars were food service cars. Revenue at the Seattle station is

down one-third from November of 1980. The Portland section of the EMPIRE BUILDER is reported showing heavy loadings--40-50 people in local Spokane-Portland business alone.....

THE WILLAMETTE VALLEY trains will probably be discontinued at the end of December, but the Oregon DOT is reportedly going to attempt to keep the stations, etc. intact so as to try the service again at a later date with SPV2000 equipment.....

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS: The new Chicago reservations center is located at 55 East Monroe, not 55 Eastman Row, as we last issue. Funny, they sound alike.....

AMTRAK'S OCT 25 TIMETABLE may be the most error-ridden to date. Here are some more errors in it pointed out by readers: (1) p. 20: Cape Cod bus schedules are for summer, not winter. (2) p. 30, on the Amtrak map: the line from Spokane WA should intersect the north-south line at Everett, not Edmonds. (3) p. 43: the bus connection for the eastbound EMPIRE BUILDER departs Grand Forks ND at 11:40am, not 11:40pm. (4) p. 43: mileages for EMPIRE BUILDER west of Spokane still show distances via Yakima. (5) p. 37: the BLUE WATER does not have checked baggage to Michigan City, which is an unmanned station. (6) the middle day of operation of train 1, the SUNSET LIMITED, should be TuThSa, not TuThSu, and for train 2 the third day should be TuThSu, not TuThSa (p. 48).....

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CHARMING CHRISTMAS SCENE shown here appears on the color cover of the Dec issue of Amtrak's Express magazine, given out to NE Corridor passengers. In the painting, a kitten is playing with a model Amtrak train under a Christmas tree. The magazine also carries another in the series of two-page color Amtrak ads showing views from train windows. This one is a nighttime view (8:34pm) of the New York skyline from Amtrak's SENATOR.....

AUTO-TRAIN AUCTION: The auction at Sanford FL on Dec 8-9 included Auto-Train cars. We did not have this information yet for the news item we gave last issue. In all, 145 cars, including auto-carriers, were up for sale. Cars were sold the first day, along with track, presumably, and commissary items were on sale the next. An elegant executive car was first on the list of auction lots, and sold for $55,000 to an anonymous Wisconsin railfan. It was purchased for him by a Thomas Boyle. Coach "Silver Feather" was purchasedfor $2000, and may be scrapped. A Kankakee IL hardware store owner, Russell Johnson, bought a car for $15,000, to convert into a restaurant. Blanch Zuckerman of Cocoa Beach FL bought two cabooses, for $2500 and $2000, apparently to use for summer housing in Saratoga Springs NY. Auto-Train trustee Murray Drabkin was reported depressed by the sale. He said that the railroad "could have been saved." In other related news, a Danish firm is having a 1600-passenger luxury car ferry built in France to use in carrying patrons from New York to Miami, with a stop in the Bahamas. The M/S "Scandinavia" is projected to be ready for use in a year. The Sanford Auto-Train terminal was not sold at the auction; Drabkin plans to sell it later.....

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR. wrote an extremely readable article on riding the ORIENT EXPRESS in the Nov 22 New York Times travel section. The train was the NOSTALGIC ORIENT EXPRESS, and Buckley rode from Zurich to Istanbul Oct 6-8. The VENICE SIMPLON ORIENT EXPRESS is to be revived in 1982, with first run May 28. It will be a regularly-scheduled year-round train, using two sets of original ORIENT EXPRESS equipment. Head of the operation is James R. Sherwood, president of the Sea Containers group. It will run London-Paris-Milan-Venice.....

News in this issue is updated thru Dec 17, 1981.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"The train, for too long considered a means of transportation of the past, is wreaking now and even more so in the future, its sweet revenge."

--French President Francois Mitterand at inaugural run of TGV, quoted in Time magazine, Oct 5.

"But despite the problems--at a time when nearly half the petroleum in the United States is being burned up in the engines of private automobiles--it seems inevitable that more and more journeys will be by common carrier. And many of those journeys will be prefaced by the cry of 'All aboard.'"

--Dalt Wonk in Louisiana Life magazine, Nov/Dec.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"The conferees agreed to a total package for Amtrak operating and capital spending of $375 million compared to the administration's recommendation for $539 million."

--New York Journal of Commerce, Nov 16.

(Alan Boyd had his heart set on $735 million.)

"Trailing a skirt of dust, northbound Amtrak Starlight Limited picks up speed leaving Santa Barbara, California."

--Photo caption in Rail Classics magazine, January.

(Sure it wasn't the SPIRIT OF CALTRANSYLVANIA?)

CARS & CONSISTS

*COAST STARLIGHT, train 11, San Jose Dec 1: engines 246, 247; cars 1267, Hi-level 39907, Superliners 31000, 31003, 34083, 34042, 34032, 33000, 38036, 32009, 32033.

*MONTREALER, train 61, White River Junction Nov 26: engines 308, 209; cars 1454, 2888, 2985 "Pine King", 2087, 20219 Amdinette, 28303 Amcafe, 21852, 21843, 21034, 21149.

*BROADWAY LIMITED, train 41, Trenton Dec 5: engine 900; cars 1611, 2980 "Pine Creek", 2089 "Loch Tray", 4710, 4707, 4700, 3101, 8505, 1225, 1226.

*SILVER METEOR, train 87, Trenton Dec 5: engine 957; cars 1166, 1628, 4019, 4648, 4639, 8506, 3118, 4006, 4010, 4009, 2446, 2454, 2440, 2092.

*CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, train 59, New Orleans Nov 28: engines 702, 701; cars 1160, 2903 "Pacific Bend", 28306, 4738, 4636, 4002, 21866, 21869, 21879. Train 58, same: engines 366, 375; cars 1211, 2444 "Magnolia Grove", 28307, 4625, 4623, 4628, 21862, 21885, 28304, 4738, 4636, 4002, 21866, 21869, 21879. (Southbound #59 was turned and combined with the layover consist to accommodate large Thanksgiving crowds.)

*ANN RUTLEDGE, train 304, Kansas City Nov 26: engine 301; cars 21023, 21120, 21003, 20210, 21202, 21226. Same, Nov 29: engine 305; cars 20228, 21247, 21118, 21193, 21202, 21226, 21197, 21020. (Ran in 2 sections Bloomington-Chicago.)

*KANSAS CITY MULE, train 341, Kansas City Nov 26: engine 304; cars 20211, 21155, 21134. Same, train 342 (ST. LOUIS MULE): engine 304; cars 21134, 21155, 20211.

*SOUTHWEST LIMITED, train 4, Kansas City Nov 26: engines 291, 282; cars 1262, 1229, Hi-level 39906, Superliner 31022, Hi-level 39946, Superliner 34061, Hi-level 39972, Superliners 38031, 32005, 32020. Same, train 3, Nov 25: engines 254, 265; cars 1143, 1252, Hi-level 39913, Superliner 31039, Hi-level 39959, Superliners 34100, 34101, Hi-level 39970, Superliners 38013, 32021, 32051.

*Amtrak conventional cars at the Seattle yards and station on Sep 23: 1161, 1164, 1165, 1173, 1195, 1514, 2216 "Indian Mesa", 2250 "Star Bay", 2994 "Pine, Lodge", 4461, 4462, 4526, 4530, 4542, 4842, 4886, 5236, 5270, 5604, 5611, 8800, 8801, 8804, 8805, domes 9310, 9350, 9354, 9450, 9452 "Silver Lariat", 9458 "Silver Brand", 9470, 9476, 9477, 9545 "Silver Vision", 9561 .

RAIL FANTRIPS

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Connecticut Railroad Historical Association programs for 1982 meetings--Jan. 31: Carlton Loucks, "Timetables of the New Haven Railroad"; Feb. 28: Samuel E. Stokes, "The Concept of a Balanced Transportation Policy for New England"; Mar. 28: F. Thomas Richardson, "New England's Railroads: How They Got Where They Are"; Apr. 25: David A. Fink, "New England Railroads in the 1980s"; May 30: Harold F. Cavanaugh, "Operations on the Berkshire Branch of the NYNH&HRR". All meetings free and open to the public, are held Sundays, 2 PM at N. Canaan Town Hall, Pease St., Canaan, CT. Phone 617-448-2224 or 203-927-3782.

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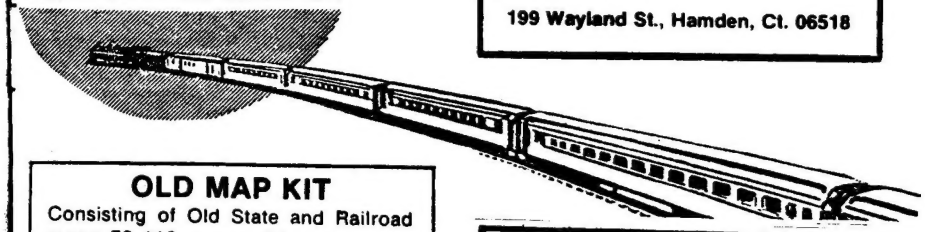

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